



Tuesday, 17 February 2009

ATTENTION ALL MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS

There has been much local and regional publicity in respect of our proposed development. Many aspects of this have been ill informed and in some cases scaremongering to the local community. The reporting has failed to recognise the huge cricket and community benefit and the opportunity to regenerate this town centre site.

We would like you to draw your attention to the attached facts about the development in respect of;

- Cricket and Community
- The development benefits
- The planning process
- The background to the flood issues

Keith Brown
Treasurer and Chairman of Ground Development Panel

David East
Chief Executive Officer

FACTS ABOUT THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CRICKET GROUND OF ESSEX CRICKET

Club and the Community

- The huge cricket and community case for this development is abundantly clear.
- Retaining first class cricket in Chelmsford to the benefit of thousands of local people who support us during the season.
- Providing training facilities for 70,000 plus cricketers through individual and group coaching, particularly young people and local clubs.
- Creating state of the art facilities to develop the international cricketers of the future Cook/Bopara/ Foster/Napier are examples of our success not forgetting Gooch, Hussein and Fletcher, all England Captains.
- Participating in the growth of the game. We are on the verge of developing International club cricket through the Twenty 20 model. Essex can be part of this if we have a modern stadium that meets ECB stipulated standards. This scheme is considered by the ECB to be appropriate and to the benefit of cricket in Essex. This would mean enormous knock-on benefits to the Chelmsford economy because of the international media exposure it will create.
- Continued provision of the Essex County Council and DCSF supported Playing for Success Learning Centre promoting the education of central Essex school children through the medium of sport.

- Ongoing community activities of the Essex County Cricket Board, also based at the Ford County Ground, who work extensively with local Clubs, schools, FE colleges and leagues to promote the game and the health agenda throughout the county.

Development

This will create;

- A regeneration of the area
- Much needed housing in line with Government and Chelmsford Council policies
- New retail units which will provide a destination venue for the area.
- An open piazza which can be enjoyed by local residents
- Direct access to the town via a new river bridge
- Meeting rooms for functions and local community groups
- Without the development there will be a blight on the ground while the Club decides on its future home and how best value can be created by perusing permissible commercial development of the site

Planning

- Our development is in line with Chelmsford's strategic development of this part of the Town and that has evolved over several years of discussion with the Council members and its officers.
- Our application has been considered by the Council's Planning Committee on two occasions. On 30th September 2008 the Planning Committee passed a 'minded not to refuse' recommendation. This was subject only to the Environment Agency being satisfied on the floodplain issue.
- The application was further considered on 28th January this year which not only reviewed the floodplain issue but also the redesign of that part of the development abutting Hayes Close. As a result of approaches made by local residents, redesign took place after the 30th September meeting.
- Residents were able to publicly give their views at the Planning Committee on 28th January. The policy objections of the Environment Agency remained so the special meeting of the Planning Committee fully debated both flooding and design issues and again were 'minded not to refuse the application'. However, as there remained the policy objection by the Environment Agency due to the situation of the site in the floodplain, it has to be referred to Go-East (The Government Department for the Eastern Region). This body will decide whether to refer to the Secretary of State but will consider the floodplain issues and no other.
- Should they refer to the Secretary of State then there will be a public enquiry when all aspects of the development will be discussed.

Flooding

- The site is designated by the Environment Agency to be in the functional floodplain. This does not purely relate to flood risk but flood storage. This means that in the event of a flood will the development remove the flood storage which already exists at our ground? The answer is no.
- The first issue is the designation of the floodplain. However, from the specific Flood Risk Assessment on the site, only a very small part is in the functional floodplain on a 1 in 20 year event. Our consultants take the view that our position in the functional floodplain is open to question as some of the data is inconclusive.
- Coming to the second issue – flood storage is not being removed because the residential blocks overlooking the river and the Club's pavilion are on a platform supported by stilts. Only cars are at ground level.
- The Council's Emergency Planners have reviewed our flood management scheme in the unlikely event of a flood and have raised no objections. This includes safe evacuation of properties and removal of cars to the multi-storey car park.
- Even with the abnormal weather conditions at the beginning of last week there was only minimal intrusion on to our site. This was entirely consistent with the expectations of the hydrological studies undertaken as a part of our application. Our architects have designed the proposed buildings on a platform in order to ensure that the residences are fully protected in the event that water levels rise to exceptional levels.
- Our development will contribute financially to the Widd barrier for the whole of Chelmsford Town Centre which brings protection not only to our site but also local residents. This barrier will be in place a year or so after the first occupation on our development, so the period of risk is very short.
- Scaremongering over insurance is counterproductive because the apartments in our development are higher than surrounding properties so that this can only succeed in raising concerns by insurers of other properties in the area while in our opinion none exists.

Keith Brown - Treasurer and Chairman of Ground Development Panel

David East - Chief Executive Officer

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